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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an inservice training project in Colorado funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). The goal of the project is to create a self-sustaining and expanding network of trained leaders in geographic education. The project addresses: (1) the need to improve and expand the geographic literacy of U.S. citizens; (2) the "Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (1984);" and (3) the initiation of local and regional activities in improving geographic education. The project is organized around these key principles: (1) staffing comprised of professional geographers and professional educators; (2) building on previous projects; (3) training leadership teams; (4) focusing training on the production of useful educational products; and (5) creating mechanisms that sustain and expand the teacher development process. During summer workshops, participants receive two weeks of intensive training, of which approximately two-thirds of the time is devoted to teaching geographic disciplinary trends, frameworks, concepts, themes, and skills and to their application in teaching and curriculum design. Continuous support is provided throughout the academic year through workshops. Academic credit at the graduate level during the project's summer phase is made available through the Geography Department of the University of Colorado, Boulder. (SM)

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BUILDING A LEADERSHIP NETWORK:

EMPOWERING TEAMS OF TEACHERS

by

A. David Hill

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BUILDING A LEADERSHIP NETWORK:

EMPOWERING TEAMS OF TEACHERS

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PURPOSE AND CONTEXT

The purpose of this paper is to offer my experience as an university geographer in conducting in-service geographic education for secondary school teachers, most of whom have little or no geographic training. Indeed, most of America's teachers have had no geographic education.

Geography has a very small place in the American secondary school curriculum (Manson, 1980 and 1981). Enrollment in geography accounted for only 5% of secondary enrollment in both 1973 and 1982 (National Center for Education Statistics, 1984). Inadequately prepared geography teachers are both a cause and a result of this situation (Winston, 1984). Moreover, it is rare in teacher education colleges and schools to find a faculty member with solid training in geography. Those education faculty members responsible for "social studies" teacher education typically have professional education degrees, not subject-matter degrees; their commitment is to the "social studies." Generally speaking, history is the only discipline that has a degree of autonomy and that is required in the social studies curriculum at the secondary level today.

There are signs of a coming renaissance in American geographic education, in spite of the tradition of neglect of school geography by geographers and the disinterest in geography of the professional education establishment. There is some slight public pressure building for geographic education, but without tremendous pressure, it is unlikely that the education establishment will provide the leadership to push hard to add geography to the curriculum.

The leadership of academic geographers is thus necessary to seize the opportunity afforded by this incipient renaissance. Included among the many tasks for the professional geographer is the in-service geography training of school teachers.

Since 1985, we have been conducting an in-service training program in Colorado funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF). This experience shows that teachers with very little or no formal geography training can become leaders who push geography among their school colleagues and in even larger contexts, e.g., two of those teachers are giving a workshop at this national conference.

THE NEED FOR TRAINING

The project addresses several needs. First, it responds to the need to improve and expand the geographic literacy of American citizens. The acknowledged neglect of geographic education in American schools is beginning to give rise to many responses. This training program is integrated with a number of these responses.

It responds to the initiative of the Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (1984), written by the Joint Committee on Geographic Education of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) and the National Council for Geographic Education (NCGE). This widely-distributed and highly influential publication has created a need to provide locally- and regionally-based training for teachers and curriculum developers in using the Guidelines.

Another need the project is addressing is the initiation of local and regional actions tied to national efforts in the improvement of geographic education, a need identified by the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), an unprecedented joint effort by America's four national geography organizations. Education in America is largely de-centralized; educational change takes place at the local level, through local initiative and cooperation.

This project also meets a special need to reinforce a regional incentive to teach more high school geography, an incentive created by a new geography admissions requirement at the University of Colorado.

Finally, the project responds directly to several specific needs identified by regional teachers who participated in a 1983 summer workshop, under the initial NSF grant that began this program.

OBJECTIVE OF TRAINING PROJECT

The long-term purpose of this project is to attack geographic illiteracy by providing enthusiastic, masterful instruction in modern geography to thousands of secondary school students. To achieve this, the project is creating a Great Plains-Rocky Mountain regional network, linked to the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), of trained leaders in geographic education. These leaders motivate, support, and learn from each other, thus sustaining the network. In turn, they train others, thus expanding the network.

GENERAL PLAN FOR THE PROJECT

This project is informed by a few key principles: (1) a staff comprised of both professional geographers and professional educators is needed; (2) building on a previous project, it is cumulative in nature; (3) it trains teams to offer leadership in their school districts; (4) it focuses training on useful educational products; and (5) it creates mechanisms that sustain and expand the teacher development process. This project began in Summer, 1986, and it incorporated the participants of the 1985 Summer Workshop. The 1985 project trained individuals from 20 different school districts, but not in teams. Although the 1985 workshop required that participants develop educational products for academic credit, the current project also requires and supports the piloting and evaluation of products as a principal teacher training mechanism. The project features several sustaining and reinforcing mechanisms not available in the initial project. Participants from all three project years,

1985-88, are connected into a growing network. The body of this paper will elaborate on these key principles. Let's turn to them now.

Selection of Staff

In selecting the staff, I turned to both professional geographers and professional educators. Nicholas Helburn is my co-director and long-time colleague in the Geography Department at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Helburn was the director of the High School Geography Project of the AAG in the 1960s. James Dunn, a graduate student specializing in geographic education, serves as our project assistant.

The two professional educators on the staff are Marilee Bradbury and A.O. Forbes. Bradbury is the Social Studies Coordinator for the Jefferson County Public Schools, the largest school district in Colorado. Forbes is a master geography teacher in the Boulder Valley (Colorado) School District. He has a B.A. and M.A. in geography from the University of Colorado, where he specialized in geographic education.

Building on the Initial Project

The project has integrated the participants of the initial 1985 Summer Workshop with participants who entered in 1986 and 1987. The project invites teachers from the previous year's group to demonstrate their products at the Summer Workshop. This serves to show new participants examples of educational products developed by other teachers in the workshop setting, thus allaying their initial fears. This experience and contact also

reinforces the geographic learning of the previous participants and integrates them into the developing leadership network. Most important, the recognition of demonstrating to peers, which is usually a new professional experience for these teachers, builds esteem, which provides motivation for further development. Such professionalization empowers. Furthermore, all participants are invited to participate in academic year project workshops and in-service programs.

Training District Leadership Teams

In 1985, we selected isolated individuals to participate, but beginning in 1986, we selected district teams. Selecting individuals allows the project, ideally, to reach into more school districts, but we became unsatisfied with that approach and switched to selecting three-member teams from districts, thus opting for fewer districts. Our experience is that, following intensive summer training, individuals back in their districts often find themselves isolated and have difficulty communicating what they have learned, sustaining their enthusiasm, and implementing their plans. The team concept produces the greatest long-term benefits because of the reinforcement that individuals get as members of district teams. Furthermore, because these teams are nominated by senior district officials, they begin the process with more legitimacy in the district than individuals applying alone would have. Such legitimacy is especially important for these potential change agents.

To recruit our teams, we send announcements and application forms to state departments of education, school superintendents,

high school principals, curriculum coordinators, and geography teachers, and to schools and colleges of education in Colorado and surrounding states.

Our announcements invite school districts to nominate leadership teams to the project. They must also name a district administrator to serve as liaison to the project. Nominations are considered only from districts that make commitments to utilize the team during the project year in the enhancement of geographic education and geography teacher development. Approximately 10 teams were chosen to begin the project in Summer, 1986, and 10 more teams began in Summer, 1987.

Ideally, each team represents a different district and is comprised of 3 persons: a curriculum specialist, a master geography teacher, and a tenured, but inexperienced geography teacher. Ideally, the curriculum specialist should have a good geography background, and should have administrative responsibility, e.g., as a curriculum coordinator or developer, staff development leader, in-service trainer, etc. The master geography teacher should have a bachelors or advanced degree in geography, at least three years of precollegiate geography teaching experience, and should have a continuing geography teaching assignment. The inexperienced geography teacher should have taken some college geography and must be scheduled to teach a geography course during the project's academic year.

(Variations are sometimes required from the above-ideals of district representation, team size, and the roles and

qualifications of members, but the integrity of the district leadership team concept is maintained.)

In nominating their teams, districts are urged to bear some of the project's costs, but NSF does not make cost-sharing a necessary condition. Districts most often pay for in-services given by their teams.

Focusing on Educational Products

We emphasize "learning by doing" by requiring the district leadership teams to develop, pilot, and evaluate educational products, an approach with which the staff has considerable experience (e.g., Hill et al., 1974). The focus on products is also maintained when the staff teaches geographic subject matter to the teams. This teaching always involves participants through the hands-on use of exemplary materials.

Beyond the teaching strategy mentioned above, there is another very important reason for focusing on geographic educational products: they are scarce. Examinations of available texts and supplementary materials for secondary-level geography (one such analysis was conducted by participants in the 1985 Summer Workshop) have consistently attested to the shortage of high quality products. The amount and quality of recent geographic education materials in this country is inferior to that available in Australia and Britain. (Australian and British materials are introduced to the teachers in this project, e.g., Slater, 1982; Fien, Gerber, and Wilson, 1984; Geography 16-19, 1984.)

The long-term neglect of geography in American schools has naturally left a large lacuna of teaching materials; the current push to add more geography makes that need even more apparent. Geography teachers need many kinds of materials. The Guidelines for Geographic Education (1984) have filled one need but they point to others. Short modules emphasizing student inquiry on significant questions are particularly needed. Another important product needed is high school geography course syllabi and program designs. Yet another need is for carefully tested, cost-effective, in-service geography teacher-training designs of at least two kinds: those to train geography in-service leaders and those used by in-service leaders to conduct programs in their schools and districts. This project develops the above-mentioned types of educational products.

The district leadership teams design, pilot, and evaluate their products with the guidance of the project staff. We stress the following guidelines:

1. Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (1984) provide basic orientation.

2. A problem, issue, and/or inquiry-focus is used whenever possible.

3. Products are self-contained and ready for teacher use.

4. Products are compatible with existing courses, programs, or other of the team's district structures and are used to improve and expand geographic education in the team's district.

5. A different leader takes responsibility for each product's design, piloting, and evaluation and for leading the team's

involvement with that product to assure that it truly represents the team's work. For example, the in-service program includes participation of each team member.

6. Project staff consult with the teams throughout.

7. Drafts of products are circulated for constructive criticism prior to piloting and after evaluations.

8. Standard formats are used to facilitate referencing, reproduction, filing, retrieval, and dissemination.

9. Pre- and post-testing of students in product trials is an important part of evaluation.

10. Abstracts of all products are disseminated to all participants in the project, and complete copies may be ordered from our clearinghouse.

11. Teams disseminate their products within their schools and districts.

12. Selected final products are disseminated through the Colorado Geographic Alliance and the National Geographic Society's network of alliances, the Colorado Council for Social Studies, at the Rocky Mountain Regional Social Studies Conference, the National Council for the Social Studies, the NCGE, and the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP).

Ideally, each team produces at least one teaching module, a course syllabus, and a plan for in-service geographic education in its district. Within the team, the inexperienced teacher is often the product leader for the teaching module; the master teacher leads the team on the syllabus; and the curriculum specialist is the leader for the in-service plan. Variations

from these ideals of course occur in order to meet the specific needs of teams and their districts.

Creating Mechanisms To Sustain Teacher Development

We conduct a number of activities to sustain teacher development and support them in the central tasks of working through the educational product cycles during the academic year. All district teams initially come together in early June for intensive 2-week workshops devoted to teaching conceptual frameworks, building team leadership capacities, and initiating product developments.

Subsequently, teams work in their districts piloting and evaluating their products, including leading in-service programs, during the academic year. The staff conducts a one-day workshop each fall and spring for all participants. Furthermore, project staff make at least one visit during the academic year to each district team. Finally, the products, having been piloted and evaluated, are disseminated by the project.

Each year's project cycle adds participants to the network. Thirty persons in 10 teams were added in 1986 to the 26 participants from the 1985 Summer Workshop, and in 1987, 30 more persons were added. Thus, the project created, in three years, a regional network of some 90 leaders trained to promote the improvement and expansion of modern geographic education for the eventual benefit of thousands of students. Under new funding from the National Geographic Society to the Colorado Geographic Alliance, we plan to add another 30 persons to the network in

1988 by conducting a three-week summer institute. These participants are brought into the network through the activities of the Alliance, which is providing financial continuity at the end of NSF funding in Spring of 1988.

Summer Workshops

In our summer workshops, participants receive two weeks of intensive training at the beginning of the Summer Term: sessions are scheduled all day long for 10 days. (In 1988, in the Colorado Geographic Alliance Summer Institute, we plan an additional week for field work and team-building at a mountain site away from the campus.) We conduct a needs assessment to reveal individual concerns and to minimize resistance to the change process. Individual and team goals are developed and recorded. A geography pre-test is also administered. Information from these measures is later compared with post-project evaluation measures.

We devote approximately two-thirds of the summer workshop time to teaching geographic disciplinary trends, frameworks, concepts, themes, and skills and to their application in teaching and curriculum and program design. Guidelines for Geographic Education (1984) is used to orient participants to many of these issues, and a wide variety of materials and techniques are demonstrated. We do not try to train teachers to teach a particular course, say, World Geography. Rather, we lay out for everyone what we think is important for any geography teacher. Then we consult with individual participants on their special

needs. Other sessions focus on team-building and the acquisition of leadership skills in order to train the teams to conduct in-service programs in their districts.

Finally, educational product development constitutes the work of several of the workshop sessions. The basic product development units are the district teams, but cross-district teams of master teachers and curriculum specialists also prove to be productive working units. The staff provides considerable direction and guidance at the outset to assure that those products are properly conceptualized in terms of recent developments both in the discipline and in teaching and learning.

District teams write-up their educational products following the workshop and submit them for evaluation of academic credit at the end of the summer term. The staff criticices the products in writing in order to aid the teams in making further preparations for piloting the products. Abstracts of the products are sent to all project participants.

Academic Year Activities

During the academic year the project staff conducts two all-day workshops, one in the fall and one in the spring. These workshops reinforce and build upon what was learned in the summer workshop, namely, geographic content, teaching techniques, and program development as well as leadership training. In addition, team progress reports on and demonstrations of their products are featured in these workshops.

A second set of academic year project activities are the

staff visits to each district. Generally, each district receives one all-day visit by one or two staff members. These visits provide reinforcement, support, and consultation to the district teams. But the specific purposes and activities involved vary according to the expressed needs of the teams.

Teams are involved throughout the academic year in the process of piloting and evaluating their educational products. Following final evaluations, participants distribute their product drafts to the staff for suggestions before they are put into final form for wider dissemination by the project. All of the final products are filed in our clearinghouse at the University of Colorado; they are available for distribution from there. Selected products are more widely disseminated by the Colorado Geographic Alliance, through the Geographic Education National Implementation Project (GENIP), and as papers read at professional meetings, and in journal articles.

Academic Credit

Academic credit at the graduate level for the project s summer phase is made available through the Geography Department of the University of Colorado, Boulder. Additional credits may be earned during academic year piloting and evaluating of educational products and leadership activities in project workshops and in-service programs. Teachers need the chance to earn academic credit for their in-service development activities; such credit provides salary and job advancement opportunities. It has, in this project, stimulated some teachers to apply for

advanced degrees in geography.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This project will be ultimately judged in terms of its long-term purpose, namely, was it instrumental in creating a self-sustaining and expanding network of trained leaders in geographic education in this region and did it link this network into other similar initiatives across the nation? And are these leaders working effectively in their districts by training others to provide enthusiastic and masterful instruction in modern geography? Has the project forged new and stronger links between the region's schools, districts, and universities? Are some of the educational products developed, piloted, and evaluated by the project being widely used and/or have they stimulated other product development and use? There are early indications that allow us to answer a cautious "Yes" to these questions. In the final analysis, are students receiving a much better geographic education because of this project: has it thus been instrumental in combatting geographic illiteracy in the nation? It is much too soon to be able to venture an answer to that question.

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